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ABSTRACT

This brief guide notes the effectiveness of self-management strategies in increasing students' responsibility for their own learning and behavior, heightening student motivation and self-esteem, and reducing demands on the teacher's time. A strategy is outlined to help students increase their on-task behavior, by having students chart, correct, and evaluate their own performance. Twenty-two resources describing the use of self-management are listed. (JDD)

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ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE ON HANDICAPPED AND GIFTED CHILDREN

ERIC/OSEP SPECIAL PROJECT ON INTERAGENCY INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

RESEARCH BRIEF FOR TEACHERS

STUDENT SELF-MANAGEMENT TO INCREASE ON-TASK BEHAVIOR

BRIEF T3
MARCH 1990

Self-management strategies have been developed to reduce problem behavior, to increase on-task behavior and social skills, to teach vocational skills, and to increase academic success in a variety of subjects. Research indicates that student self-management can have a number of benefits. Overall, self-management strategies increase students' responsibility for their own learning and behavior. Self-management can heighten student motivation and self-esteem as well as reduce demands on the teacher's time. Resources describing the use of self-management to accomplish these and other goals are listed at the end of this brief.

Student self-management involves having students correct, chart, or evaluate their own performance. In some applications, self-management also includes goal-setting. While using these strategies, the teacher can monitor, provide feedback for, and reinforce student behavior. Thus, these strategies fit in well with many instructional programs and can be paired with other motivational techniques and reward systems. The strategy described below uses self-monitoring to help students increase their on-task behavior, resulting in an increase in the amount of their work completed in class.

PREPARE FOR SELF-MONITORING

First, establish a cueing system to let the students know when to self-monitor. This can be done by recording a series of tones on a tape recorder, by raising your hand, or by making marks on the blackboard. The time between cues must be random so that students cannot predict when the monitoring time will occur. The time intervals should vary from 10 to 90 seconds, and the entire monitoring period should be less than 10 minutes.

Specifically identify the behaviors to be monitored. For example, in a class of 10- to 16-year-old students who were not able to complete their daily work without supervision, the behaviors to be monitored were "paying attention" and "not paying attention." Paying attention was defined as doing the assigned work. Not paying attention was defined as doing anything that was not the assigned work, such as talking, looking around the room, drawing, or cleaning one's desk.

Prepare recording sheets that contain spaces for the student's name and date, a question asking whether the expected behavior is being performed (e.g., Was I working?), and columns for "yes" or "no."

INTRODUCE THE STUDENTS TO SELF-MONITORING

Let the students know why they are being asked to self-monitor and what they will be doing. In the example, the teacher explained that she wanted them to pay more attention to their work. She described the expected behavior as previously defined.

Distribute the recording sheets and tell the students that the sheets are to keep track of the behaviors to be monitored (e.g. "paying attention" and "not paying attention"). Act out some examples of paying attention and not paying attention and ask the students to mark their recording sheets "yes" or "no" based on your examples.

Explain to the students that they will hear a tone from a recorder at random times (or that you will be raising your hand or making a mark on the blackboard at random times), and that this will be their signal to mark on their recording sheets whether or not they were paying attention. Give them these instructions to use when self-monitoring: "When I hear a tone, I ask myself if I am paying attention to my work. If I am, I mark 'yes,' and keep working. If I am not, I mark 'no,' and tell myself to get back to work."

Begin the tape recorder, and first act as if you were the student. Then let the students practice on their own. Perform a final check by asking the students to repeat both definitions—paying attention and not paying attention—and the self-monitoring questions just given.

Review the self-monitoring procedure briefly after holidays and weekends.

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TRACK STUDENT PROGRESS

Monitor the amount of student work completed in class along with the data from the recording sheets. Evaluate them both over time. They can be charted using days on the X axis and, on the Y axis, "yes" responses, "no" responses, and classwork completed. Classwork completed should be expressed in a number, such as the number of reading problems, words or passages completed, or the number of math problems completed. The monitoring procedure can be paired with a reward system in which students who show improvement can earn privileges. Teachers who used the self-monitoring strategy found that students' on-task behavior increased immediately and continued to increase while the procedure was in use. They noted that disruptive behavior decreased during self-monitoring, and productivity increased.

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